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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 003283

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: JAPAN ANNOUNCES END TO IRAQ DEPLOYMENT; LAUDS
AGREEMENTS WITH U.S.

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
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¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso November 28 officially announced Japan's intention to end the deployment of Air Self Defense Forces (ASDF) stationed in Kuwait in support Operation Iraqi Freedom by the end of December. MOFA contacts tell us the ASDF plans to fly its last mission on December 12, and the first of its three C-130 aircraft based at Ali Al Salim Air Base will depart on December 15. The last of its three aircraft will depart on December 17, but it will take until Spring 2009 to fully wrap up Japan's operations in Kuwait. Separately, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hirofumi Nakasone issued a statement welcoming the approval by the Iraqi Council of Representatives of the U.S.-Iraq agreements. Both Prime Minister Aso and Foreign Minister Nakasone pledged continued support to Iraq. END SUMMARY.

ASDF MISSION TO END

¶2. (C) Japan will withdraw the three ASDF C-130 aircraft, accompanying crews and support personnel by the end of December, Prime Minister Aso announced on November 28. MOFA officials have told us the ASDF will fly its final mission into Iraq on December 12, and its aircraft will depart Kuwait en route home December 15-17, but that it will take until sometime in Spring 2009 for the Japanese to finally wrap up their operations at Ali Al Salim Air Base. The Japanese are stating that the withdrawal is possible because the ASDF has successfully completed its mission and are not explicitly mentioning the looming expiration of the U.N. Security Council resolution which authorizes Coalition operations inside Iraq. As a result, some in the press are speculating that the timing of the Japanese departure has been fixed to coincide with the end of the current U.S. administration. The full text of Prime Minister Aso's statement follows below.

¶3. (U) BEGIN TEXT OF PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT (Provisional Translation)

The Government of Japan decided that it will complete the mission of the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) in Iraq, by the end of this year, based on the judgment that the objectives of the ASDF's mission has now been fulfilled.

The international community has been unified in providing support for Iraq's reconstruction in order to assist the Iraqi people's efforts to reconstruct and rebuild their

country. Japan, for its part, has been steadily assisting Iraq by combining the contribution by the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and Official Development Assistance (ODA) as the "two inseparable pair of Japan's assistance."

The process of establishing a democratic government has made steady progress and the security situation in Iraq has shown trends of improvement. As seen in such developments, the Iraqi people have been proceeding with self-sustained reconstruction.

The ASDF has been contributing to the stability and reconstruction of Iraq by providing airlift assistance for the activities of the United Nations and the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I). The ASDF has conducted about 810 flights and transported a total of about 46,000 passengers and about 670 tons of cargo. Such airlift assistance has received appreciation by the Iraqi Government, the UN and the MNF-I related countries.

The UN has started operating its own chartered flights for United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). As for the MNF-I, there are several countries that have completed their activities. Iraq, for its part, has an intention to consult with the relevant countries on the activities and composition of MNF-I beyond the end of this year.

Today's decision is also based on such an intention on the part of Iraq. The UN and relevant countries have also expressed understanding on this decision.

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The Government of Japan takes this opportunity to express its gratitude to the people and the government of Iraq for having warmly welcomed the SDF, as well as the UN and the relevant countries that have cooperated with the SDF, including Kuwait and the United States.

I am proud of every member of the ASDF who is conducting their missions under severe working conditions. I express my sincere respect and appreciation to those who have fulfilled their mission. I call for continuing dedication of each member of the ASDF to their mission until its completion.

The Government of Japan will continue assistance projects such as yen-loan financed projects and technical assistance, beyond the completion of the ASDF's mission by the end of this year. It is time that the bilateral relationship between Japan and Iraq be stepped up to focus on enhanced political dialogues as well as on the promotion of business and economic relationships. The Government of Japan will continue making efforts so that the results of Japan's reconstruction assistance provided thus far will take root, while aiming at fostering a broader and long-term friendly relationship with Iraq.

END TEXT.

JAPAN LAUDS IRAQI APPROVAL OF U.S. AGREEMENTS

14. (U) Also on November 28, Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone issued a statement welcoming the approval by the Iraqi Council of Representatives of agreements with the United States. The text of his statement follows:

BEGIN TEXT

STATEMENT BY MR. HIROFUMI NAKASONE, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ON IRAQ'S APPROVAL OF AGREEMENTS WITH THE UNITED STATES

The Government of Japan welcomes the approval by the Iraqi Council of Representatives on November 27 of bilateral

agreements with the United States that, among others, stipulate the U.S. military presence from next year, expecting that the approval will contribute to the stability of Iraq. Japan hopes that the Government of Iraq will continue to develop Iraq into a democratic and stable nation, under the cooperation with the international community.

Japan has actively contributed to the reconstruction of Iraq with the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces and through Official Development Assistance (ODA) as the inseparable pair of Japan's assistance.

Japan will remain committed to assisting the reconstruction of Iraq and to strengthening the bilateral relations between Japan and Iraq and will continue to further strengthen the bilateral partnership between Japan and Iraq, through continuing assistance such as (1) implementing ODA loan projects, (2) technical cooperation (capacity building), and (3) strengthening economic and business relationship.

END TEXT.

SCHIEFFER